

Message Text

PAGE 01 PARIS 29702 171522Z

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: FR, PFOR

SUBJECT: FRENCH MEDIA VIEWS OF EC NINE STANCE ON MIDDLE EAST

SUMMARY: SOME FRENCH PRESS OBSERVERS HAVE DEVELOPED SINGULARLY
ACID VIEW OF EUROPEAN POSITION ON MIDDLE EAST CRISIS AS DELINEATED
IN NOVEMBER 6 BRUSSELS STATEMENT BY EC NINE FOREIGN MINISTERS.

THEY PICTURE EUROPE AS NON-EXISTENT, POWERLESS TO INFLUENCE
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS, HOPELESSLY OUT OF MIDDLE EAST
DECISION-MAKING, PROBABLY SUBJECT TO FURTHER "BLACKMAIL"
SUCH AS THE ARAB OIL CUTBACK, AND INCREASINGLY VULNERABLE

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PAGE 02 PARIS 29702 171522Z

TO SOVIET INFLUENCE. THOUGH GOVT SPOKESMEN, NOTABLY JOBERT
IN NOVEMBER 12 SPEECH, HAVE ALSO COMPLAINED OF EUROPE'S
BEING TREATED AS "NON-PERSON", SOME PRESS COMMENT SINGLES
OUT PRESENT AND PAST "GAULLIST" POLICY AS LARGEMLY TO BLAME.

WE BELIEVE THIS VIEW, THOUGH REFLECTING FEELINGS OF LARGE SECTOR OF FRENCH PUBLIC CRITICAL OF GOVERNMENT IN MIDDLE EAST CRISIS, IS TOO SHALLOW TO EXERT SUFFICIENT PRESSURE ON GOVERNMENT TO PRODUCE BASIC POLICY CHANGE. END SUMMARY.

1. IN WEEKLY LE POINT, POLITICAL EDITOR GEORGES SUFFERT RECALLED EUROPEAN NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS ON MORNING AFTER EC NINE MINISTERS PUBLISHED DECLARATION ON MIDDLE EAST. "ONE PHRASE SPRANG FORTH", HE WROTE: "THE MUNICH OF OIL". BUT, HE DECLARED FURTHER ON, "TO SIGN A MUNICH-TYPE AGREEMENT, ONE MUST AT LEAST EXIST AS AN ENTITY. EUROPE CAN'T EVEN DO THIS, SINCE IT DOES NOT EXIST. WHAT IS SO STRIKING TODAY IS PRECISELY THIS NON-EXISTENCE." SUFFERT FELT "EVERYONE" IS TO BLAME--FROM BRITAIN FOR NOT WANTING TO LISTEN TO JEAN MONNET IN 1950, TO DE GAULLE WHO DERIDED "EUROPE", TO CONVINCED EUROPEANS "WHO HAVE NEVER STOPPED SUSPECTING FRANCE". IN SHORT, HE WROTE, EUROPE IS "ONLY A SHADOW".

2. IN RIVAL EXPRESS, COLUMNIST JEAN-FRANCOIS REVEL ASSERTED THAT EUROPE'S "FIRST POLITICAL ACT IN COMMON" NOVEMBER 6 IN BRUSSELS WAS "AN ACT OF ABDICATION". HE ARGUED THAT GOAL SOUGHT BY SOVIET UNION SINCE 1945--TO EXTEND ITS INFLUENCE OVER WESTERN EUROPE WITHOUT PROVOKING WAR WITH U.S.--"HAS BEEN ACHIEVED VIA THE ARAB ROUTE AND WITH THE ECONOMIC WEAPON GIVEN THE SOVIETS BY THEIR ARAB ALLIANCE". MOSCOW, HE WROTE, HAS BROUGHT OFF A CONSIDERABLE VICTORY, AND "IT IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE THAT THE WEEK OF NOVEMBER 4-10 73 WILL HISTORICALLY MARK THE BEGINNING OF WESTERN EUROPE'S NEUTRALIZATION AND OF THE END OF THE ATLANTIC PACT." SOVIET UNION, SAID REVEL, REMAINS MASTER OF THE TERRAIN, WITH FOREMOST MILITARY POWER IN THE WORLD, ITS FLEET IN MEDITERRANEAN AND SOON, THANKS TO PROBABLE EARLY OPENING OF CANAL, IN ENTIRE INDIAN OCEAN. TURNING BACK TO WHAT HE CALLED EUROPE'S "SUBMISSION", REVEL THOUGHT THAT, CONTRARY TO "JUSTIFICATIONS" MADE, EUROPE HAS DRAWN NO "MORAL CREDIT, NOR ANY PRESTIGE AS A MEDIATOR" FROM HER FALSE NEUTRALITY". CEASEFIRE COMPROMISE ACHIEVED BY SECRETARY KISSINGER, HE SAID, AND VISIBLE PROSPECT OF DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS, LIKE PRECEDING PHASES OF CONFLICT, LEFT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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PAGE 03 PARIS 29702 171522Z

EUROPE ASIDE, "AS IF IT DID NOT EXIST". IN SAME ISSUE OF EXPRESS PUBLISHER JEAN-JACQUES SERVAN-SCHREIBER CALLED BRUSSELS STATEMENT "CAPITULATION IN THE ENERGY WAR". THE "POOR NINE", HE SAID, HAVE SIGNALLED ARAB COUNTRIES THAT "INDUSTRIAL WORLD WILL HAVE TO ABIDE BY THEIR CONDITIONS." ADDED LE MONDE: "IT IS NOT TO BE FEARED THAT, IN GIVING WAY, OR SEEMING TO GIVE WAY, TO OIL SANCTIONS, EUROPE IS ENCOURAGING ARAB COUNTRIES TO USE THIS FORMIDABLE WEAPON WITH EVEN GREATER AUDACITY---AND MIGHT BE INCITING OTHER HOLDERS OF VITAL RESOURCES TO DO THE SAME?"

3. SOME OF THIS COMMENT APPEARED TO REFLECT THE PUBLIC VIEWS OF GOVERNMENT OR PRO-GOVERNMENT SPOKESMEN, AT LEAST WHERE EUROPE'S

CURRENT PROBLEMS ARE CONCERNED. LE MONDE OF NOVEMBER 15 CARRIED LONG ARTICLE BY FORMER GAULLIST MINISTER CHALANDON, IN WHICH, THOUGH SUBJECT IS EUROPEAN DEFENSE, ECHO CAN BE FOUND OF JOBERT COMPLAINT (IN NOVEMBER 12 NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SPEECH) THAT EUROPE HAD BEEN TREATED AS A "NON-PERSON". CHALANDON SAID MIDDLE EAST WAR "UNDERLINED WHAT WE, ALAS, KNEW ONLY TOO WELL: THE POLITICAL NON-EXISTENCE OF WESTERN EUROPE IN TODAY'S WORLD, AN ITS IMPOTENCE NOT ONLY IN ACTING BEYOND ITS OWN BORDERS EVEN WHERE ITS VITAL INTERESTS ARE CONCERNED, BUT TO CONTROL ITS OWN DESTINY". IN AURORE SAME DAY, PHILIPPE BERNERT MUSED ON SAME THEME: "THE KISSINGER DIPLOMACY CURRENTLY BEING DEPLOYED FROM CAIRO TO PEKING IS A . . . NEW YALTA, EVEN MORE REALISTIC AND PRAGMATIC THAN THAT OF 1945. IN THIS FRIGHTFUL GAME, IN THIS NEW DEAL, THE SMALL AND MIDDLE-SIZED NATIONS ARE NOTHING MORE THAN 'NON-PERSONS', AS JOBERT SAID".

4. BUT IF PRESS AND GOVERNMENT SEEMED TO ECHO ONE ANOTHER ON SOME POINTS, OTHER COMMENTATORS (LIKE SUFFERT CITED ABOVE) HAVE PUT AT LEAST PARTIAL BLAME FOR EUROPE'S SITUATION ON GAULLIST POLICIES. RICHARD LISCIA IN COMBAT PULLED FEWEST PUNCHES ON THS. EUROPE'S POSITION ON MIDDLE EAST EVENTS WAS NOT THE PRODUCT OF A SOVEREIGN WILL OPERATING WITHOUT OUTSIDE PRESSURE, HE CONTENDED, BUT CAME UNDER THREAT OF OIL EMBARGO. "WITH RARE IMAGINATION", HE IRONIZED, " THE EUROPEANS IN A BRUSSELS STATEMENT REFERRED TO ANOTHER DOCUMENT, RESOLUTION 242, OF THAT "OTHER BIG ABSENTEE" FROM INTERNATIONAL DECISION-MAKING, THE UN. "THOSE WHO TEN YEARS AGO WERE ALREADY ADVOCATING THE INITIATIVES MR. JOBERT IS PROPOSING TODAY, HAVE REASON TO BE INDIGNANT. EUROPE IS PAYING FOR FRANCE'S ERROR, FOR THE DELAYS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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PAGE 04 PARIS 29702 171522Z

STUBBORNLY INTERPOSED BY DE GAULLE, FOR IRREPARABLE WASTE OF TIME, FOR WHICH EUROPE NOW APPEARS IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD AS A 'NON-PERSON', HUMILIATED AND BRUSHED ASIDE. . . . JOBERT CHOSE THE MOMENT OF THE FUNERAL MEDITATION BEFORE EUROPE'S LAST REMAINS TO DELIVER HIS MOST PRO-EUROPEAN SPEECH. . . . WHAT A PITY EUROPEAN POLITICAL INTEGRATION WAS NOT ACHIEVED EARLIER!"

5. COMMENT: THIS SAMPLE OF ADVERSE PRESS REACTION TO CURRENT GOVT MIDDLE EAST STANCE PROBABLY REFLECTS OPINION OF AN IMPORTANT SEGMENT OF FRENCH PUBLIC WHICH CUTS ACROSS ALL PARTY LINES, EXCLUDING COMMUNISTS AND ULTRA GAULLISTS. THIS SEGMENT OF PUBLIC HAS BEEN SHOCKED BY WHAT IT REGARDS AS CONDESCENSION IN ASSURANCES BY SOME ARAB SPOKESMEN THAT FRANCE NEED NOT WORRY ABOUT ITS OIL SUPPLIES, AND HAS BEEN FAVORABLY IMPRESSED BY WIDESPREAD TELEVISION COVERAGE OF DUTCH EFFORTS TO COPE WITH OIL SHORTAGES. RECENT POLLS SHOW THAT SOLID MAJORITY OF FRENCHMEN SAY THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO CUT BACK THEIR OWN CONSUMPTION OF OIL IF THE SACRIFICES WERE NEEDED TO HELP THEIR COMMON MARKET PARTNERS. EMBASSY'S GUESS, HOWEVER, IS THAT SENTIMENT, WHILE FAIRLY WIDESPREAD, IS PROBABLY NOT VERY DEEP. AS OF NOW, IN ANY CASE,

PRESSURE OF PUBLIC OPINION DOES NOT APPEAR STRONG ENOUGH TO CAUSE
GOVT TO MODIFY ITS MIDDLE EAST POLICIES IN ANY IMPORTANT WAY.
IRWIN

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